



## **Western Spirit: Scottsdale's Museum of the West Presents New Exhibition of Contemporary Western Master Artist Tom Gilleon**

**SCOTTSDALE, Ariz., January 3, 2023** – [Western Spirit: Scottsdale's Museum of the West](#) announced today the debut of *Inner Light: The Art of Tom Gilleon*, celebrating a painter who has become one of the most respected masters in contemporary Western art. Before dedicating himself to fine art in the 1990s, Gilleon was an accomplished illustrator who worked on NASA's Apollo and Saturn space programs and then embarked on a successful career with Walt Disney Imagineering, where he was mentored by several of their master artists. The exhibition opens on January 16, 2024, and will continue through August 2024.

*Inner Light: The Art of Tom Gilleon* features luminescent colors and authentic portrayals of Native Americans and iconic Western structures and landscapes. The exhibition presents a 70-painting career retrospective featuring 12 original paintings on special loan from Walt Disney Imagineering. Gilleon worked alongside Walt Disney Imagineering art legend Herb Ryman and other greats, and his art helped develop the concepts for Imagineering's projects worldwide.

*Inner Light: The Art of Tom Gilleon* is co-curated by Tim Peterson, Western Spirit Trustee, and Richard King of KingArts art agency, in collaboration with Western Spirit.

Noted writer, Gilleon collector, and friend Patrick Hemingway described Gilleon's sophisticated use of colors as "magical elegance" and compared him to modern greats Edward Hopper and Mark Rothko. In addition to showcasing paintings created throughout Gilleon's Western art career, the exhibit also presents the world premiere of *Spirit Catcher*, his stunning 22-minute digital painting triptych that magically morphs before viewers' eyes, created with former Disney Imagineer and concept designer Marshall Monroe of Marshall Monroe Magic.

Western Spirit's CEO and Executive Director Todd Bankofier, says, "Tom Gilleon's mastery of light and the emotional resonance it brings to his art is remarkable. *Inner Light* is a testament to his profound ability to infuse his creations with the very essence of the American West, inviting viewers to explore hidden treasures of the soul within the landscapes we often take for granted."

"The Tom Gilleon retrospective will be a major exhibition by one of the greatest living American artists today," notes Tim Peterson. "His artistic odyssey is a brilliant fusion of nature, light, and spirit that transcends traditional artistic boundaries."

*Inner Light: The Art of Tom Gilleon* promises to be an immersive experience, allowing visitors to delve into the heart of the American West and discover a world where nature and the human spirit are harmoniously intertwined. Wall signage throughout the show features Gilleon's own words, explaining his life and work directly to museum visitors.

Western Spirit features regularly changing and permanent exhibits of Western and Native American art and artifacts, entertaining events, and informative programs that bring the West's heritage, culture, and community to life. Other current special exhibitions are *Werner Segarra: Vaqueros de la Cruz del Diablo*, through February 25, 2024; *William Matthews: Decades*, through April 28, 2024; the *Elliott Southwest Women Art collection preview*, through Fall 2023; and "*Dazzling Array: The Richard A. Gates Collection of Native American Jewelry*," currently on display.

Permanent exhibitions continuously on display include *Canvas of Clay: Hopi Pottery Masterworks from The Allan and Judith Cooke Collection*, featuring 65 of the finest examples of Hopi pottery spanning six centuries; the *Frankie and Howard Alper Collection of John Coleman Bronzes*; and *The Abe Hays Family Spirit of the West Collection*, a showcase of more than 1,400 saddles, spurs, cowboy gear and other Old West objects.

For more information on *Western Spirit*: Scottsdale's Museum of the West, visit [Scottsdalemuseumwest.org](http://Scottsdalemuseumwest.org).

### **About Western Spirit: Scottsdale's Museum of the West**

Western Spirit is located in the heart of Old Town Scottsdale. Within months of opening in January 2015, Western Spirit qualified as a Smithsonian Affiliate. The museum has also received the TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence, enjoys a 4.5 out of 5-star rating on both TripAdvisor and Yelp, and is continually recognized as one of the "Nation's Best Western Museums" by *True West* magazine, most recently named the #1 Western Museum in the United States for 2023. Also, named to Phoenix Magazine's 2022 Best of The Valley Readers' Choice: "Best Museum You Probably Don't Know About", Arizona Foothill's Best of Our Valley: "Best Museum" & "Best Annual Charity Event: Saddle Up" and the winner of Your Valley's "East Valley Favorites" for the museum category. For more information, visit [www.scottsdalemuseumwest.org](http://www.scottsdalemuseumwest.org).

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